

For the Week of February 20, 2024

Below is a letter from your Selectboard:

Dear Colchester Voters, Residents, and Taxpayers:

We, your Selectboard, are writing to provide information on the Town of Colchester's FY 25 Municipal Services Budget to be voted on for Town Meeting Day 2024.

The budget maintains the current level of municipal services and recognizes that growth in Colchester requires additional resources to sustain its present level of service to the community. Of the 25 service areas that make up the budget, three have reduced expenses, one remained the same and four increased by \$5,000 or less. Along with the previously approved capital items, the tax impact of the municipal services budget is a 4.6% increase to municipal services property taxes.

The changes needed to maintain the current level of service to the community include:

- **Two additional police officers**, to reduce our calls per officer making time for community policing
- **Additional Rescue Member** (Advanced Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic) due to increasing calls and the need to provide the Assistant Rescue Chief with time to support the staff
- **Police Support Services Manager** to oversee public safety communications (dispatch) and records (which helps prepare cases for court) providing a Lieutenant more time to manage Police services
- **Human Resource Coordinator** to address sustained higher rate of employee turnover due to societal changes, especially public safety which is more than half our employee base
- **Information Technology Manager** to support public safety and other departments with regard to cybersecurity threats, departmental specific software and network connectivity
- **Firefighter** that was hired in June of 2023
- **Asst. Fire Chief** moved from half- to full-time to better support the career and volunteer staff

We have continually attended to the needs of the Town's primary public safety services: police, fire, and rescue. Since FY 20, the budgets we have proposed, and that voters have approved, have improved these core municipal service budgets as follows:

- **Police: + \$1,079,161, 30%**
- **Fire: + \$280,473, 33%**
- **Rescue: + \$255,620, 38%** (all of which came from non-tax rescue billing revenues)

We make the most of non-property tax revenues and prioritize fiscal sustainability. More than half of the capital expenses in FY 24 were supported by grants. Careful management of the budget in FY 23 allowed revenues to exceed expenses, and because of this, \$351,000 in fund balance from FY 23 will be used as revenue to offset tax increases in FY 25.

Based on 2023-24 taxes, Colchester's municipal services taxes are the second lowest per resident among the seven inner Chittenden County communities. We ask that you support the FY 25 municipal services budget with your vote.

Sincerely,

Your Colchester Selectboard



Pam Loranger, Chair



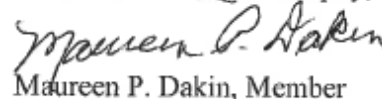
Tom Mucahy, Vice Chair



Jacki Murphy, Clerk



Charlie Papillo, Member



Maureen P. Dakin, Member

Manager's Message

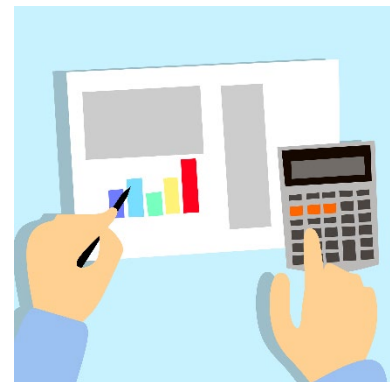
Aaron Frank, Town Manager

Town Meeting Day is fast approaching! The Annual Town Meeting will be held Monday, March 4, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Colchester High School Auditorium. You can learn about the budget by watching this [video](#). Voting by Australian Ballot will take place Tuesday, March 5, 2024 from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Colchester High School, but early/absentee voting is also an option. In-person and early/absentee voting information can be accessed [here](#) and you can view the sample ballot [here](#).

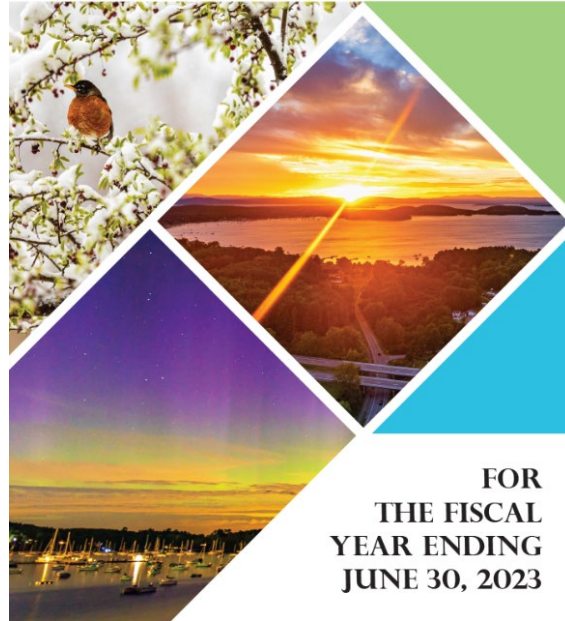


Town Audit: The Town of Colchester has received its annual audit from Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C. (Certified Public Accountants). We have a clean audit, with no findings. Congratulations to Finance Director Lara Alemy and staff members Amy Baker, Lorena Bortz, and Ben Castor for their consistent production of accurate financial records; to the Town Clerk/Treasurer Julie Graeter and her staff for billing and recording revenues in a responsible manner; and to the entire Town staff who must follow ten different Selectboard policies related to financial management. Find the audit report here:

<https://colchestervt.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/900>



COLCHESTER 102ND ANNUAL TOWN REPORT



FOR
THE FISCAL
YEAR ENDING
JUNE 30, 2023

Annual Town Report Available: The Town of Colchester has completed its Annual Town Report. The report includes directories of local officials and services; shares challenges and successes from the past year from your Town Selectboard, boards, commissions and staff, and reviews proposals for the upcoming year. You can pick up a copy from the Town Offices or read it online here: <https://colchestervt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8750/22-23TownReport---Final>

Public Notice from the State: The State of Vermont's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is seeking input on an Amendment to the Vermont Recovery Housing Program Action Plan that considers funding from the State. For more information, please visit DHCD's website at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp/recovery-housing-program>. Please send all comments via email to Cindy.Blondin@vermont.gov or mail to Cindy Blondin, Grants Management Analyst, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, 1 National Life Drive, Davis Building, 6th Floor, Montpelier, VT 05620 by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 1, 2024.



**Champlain
Water District**

The Champlain Water District (CWD)
Income Survey #2: CWD, an independent, special-purpose government, which provides water to much of Colchester is trying to collect income data in an effort to obtain state and federal funding, which we all contribute to. If CWD succeeds with such funding, it will help keep the price of water down. This is

CWD's second attempt at collecting income survey responses. A sample of water customers will receive a survey in the mail notifying them of the survey. CWD encourages participants to complete the survey online, but participants may also elect to complete the printed form and mail it back to CWD in the provided postage-paid envelope within two weeks of receipt.

CWD understands that being asked about your income is intrusive. CWD assures you that your answers are completely confidential and will only be used to calculate an average of income in our community. As a reward for participating in the survey, you will be eligible for one of five \$50 gift cards and a new grand prize \$200 gift card. If you have questions, please contact CWD at 802-864-7454.

Remembering Colchester's Buffalo

Soldiers: Especially during Black History Month, we proudly honor and remember the Buffalo Soldiers who served at Fort Ethan Allen. The Vermont Historical Marker located at the Fort reads as follows:

"In July of 1909, the 10th U.S. Cavalry arrived at Fort Ethan Allen for a four-year assignment. Nicknamed the 'Buffalo Soldiers' during the American Indian Wars, the 10th Cavalry was one of the first peacetime all-black regiments established in the regular U.S. Army after the Civil War. Highly decorated and famous for their professionalism and contributions during the Spanish-American War in Cuba, the 10th Cavalry became popular with the local community, hosting many performances, parades, and sporting events. After the 10th Cavalry suffered heavy losses in Arizona during a skirmish with Mexican troops in 1916, residents of Winooski expressed their grief in a condolence letter to the regiment's leader."

For more about the Buffalo Soldiers, please visit <http://www.parkinsonbooks.com/.../buffalosoldiers.html>
To view a short video about the Buffalo Soldiers by the Vermont Historical Society, please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWm5tAwVsx8>.



Photo courtesy of the Fort Ethan Allen Museum



Photo courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society



Image courtesy of Shaw's

Show a Little Love this February: Show the Colchester Historical Society a little love with your purchase of reusable shopping bags when you're at Colchester Shaw's this month. For each \$3 bag purchased during the month of February, the Colchester Historical Society will receive \$1. Ask your clerk for these bags at check-out. Thanks for your loving support!

About the Colchester Historical Society: The Colchester Historical Society is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Colchester's history. It shares historical information and hosts history-related events within the community. To learn more or become a member, please visit: <https://colchestervt.gov/3050/Member-Application-Form>. Everyone is welcome at programs and events. Membership fees and donations help support the organization's mission to preserve and share Colchester's wonderful local history.



Upcoming Town Meetings & Agendas

Selectboard Meeting: Tuesday, March 12, 6:30 p.m. at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Alternatively, send a note, up to 1,000 words, to TownManager@colchestervt.gov with "Citizens to be Heard" in the Subject and your name. As with in-person Citizens to be Heard, we ask that you SHARE YOUR ADDRESS. The email will be shared with the entire Selectboard prior to the meeting and included in the information packet at the next meeting.

- Watch the Meeting Online via Live Stream: <http://lcatv.org/live-stream-2>
- Agenda: www.bit.ly/Colchester-SB-Agendas

Recreation Advisory Board: Wednesday, March 13 7:00 a.m. at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd floor, Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=RecAdv&path=BOARDS%2CRecAdv%2C>

Development Review Board: Wednesday, March 13, 7:00 p.m. at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Residents are welcome to attend the meeting or public comments can be submitted prior to the hearing by email to zmaia@colchestervt.gov or by mail to Town of Colchester, c/o Development Review Board,



Colchester – What do you want to do today?

781 Blakely Road, Colchester, VT 05446. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=DRBAgenda>

Colchester Conservation Commission: Monday, March 18, 6:00 p.m., at the Colchester Town Offices, 2nd Floor, Champlain Room, 781 Blakely Road. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=ConservCommssn&path=BOARDS%2CConservCommssn%2C>

Library Board of Trustees: Thursday, March 21, 4:00 p.m., in the Burnham Room of the Burnham Memorial Library. Agenda: <https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=LibBoard&path=BOARDS%2CLibBoard%2C>

Subscribe to the Town Newsletter: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/jkMA02v>

For more information or to comment, call 802-264-5509 or email townmanager@colchestervt.gov